



*America's Housing Technology
and Information Resource*

September 4, 2002

G. William Pennington
Chief Energy Efficiency Program Specialist
California Energy Commission
1516 Ninth Street, MS 28
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Pennington:

I have been following the activities of the Commission as you evaluate possible upgrading of the California Energy Efficiency Standards. Since recent discussions have centered on the installation of insulation products, specifically the quality of such installations, I thought you should be aware of our Insulation Contractor Certification Program.

The NAHB Research Center has, for over 25 years, offered performance certification for products used in new home construction. One of those products is fiber glass insulation. We currently certify the thermal performance of products produced by three of the nation's largest manufacturers, Johns Manville, CertainTeed and Knauf.

Aware of the importance of the proper installation of insulation, we contacted CertainTeed Corporation and in 1995 jointly developed the Certified Contractor Program. It was, and still is, the only third-party certification program in the industry. We do the certification, not the product manufacturer. The program involves an on site audit by a representative of the Research Center twice a year. The audit includes a review of the contractor quality system records as well as random job-site inspections. I am enclosing some information on this program for your review.

Our hope would be that when your final revisions are adopted and if they contain a contractor certification provision, you would accept our certified contractors as certified under your program.

Don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. I can be reached at 301-430-6200.

Sincerely,

Liza K. Bowles
President

cc: Robert Pernell
Commissioner
California Energy Commission
1516 Ninth Street, MS 33
Sacramento, CA 95814



INSULATION CONTRACTOR CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

The ICC program was developed jointly by CertainTeed Corporation and the NAHB Research Center, Inc. CertainTeed is one of the largest manufacturers and suppliers of insulation products for the construction industry in the U.S. The NAHB Research Center, Inc., a not-for-profit independent testing organization, is a wholly owned subsidiary of the National Association of Home Builders. The aim of the program is to promote quality assurance practices through the development and implementation of quality management systems in the insulation contractor's organization.

The NAHB Research Center has been certifying building products for many years. Certification has been available for insulation products, but the ICC program is the first program to actually certify the contractors who install insulation in residential properties. The first contractor was certified in 1995 and there are now over 140 certified contractors throughout the United States.

When a contractor joins the program they are agreeing to follow quality assurance standards, which are based upon the internationally recognized standard, ISO 9002 (1994). Requirements and procedures are set out in documents such as the CertainTeed Quality Guide or other NAHB/RC recognized quality guides, which are followed by each participating contractor.

The role of the NAHB Research Center is to act as an independent third party agency and perform semi-annual audits of each participating contractor to verify conformance to the requirements of the program. The certification program is administered by the Laboratory Services Division of the Research Center.

THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS

The process of qualification as NAHB Research Center Certified Contractor begins after a contractor has implemented their quality assurance system. The qualification has two components:

1. An office audit of the contractor's quality management system
2. A job-site evaluation of the installation processes and finished jobs.

The office audit evaluates the contractor's quality management system and determines the contractor's level of conformance against the requirements specified in the quality manual or standard.

Both the office audit, as well as the job site audit, is based on a detailed series of audit forms with required questions and inspection details. An NAHB Research Center field representative performs the audit and then submits the audit report to the Research Center for review and final scoring.

A contractor who passes the qualification audit earns the Certified Contractor Seal. At this point, the contractor and NAHB Research Center sign a License Agreement authorizing the contractor to use the seal.

LABORATORY SERVICES

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RETAINING THE CERTIFICATION

Once qualified, certified contractors are required to undergo verification audits approximately every six months. The content of a verification audit is very similar to a qualification audit, and assures that Certified Contractors maintain their quality management system.

THE AUDIT PROCESS

The audit is authorized by the Research Center on a pre-determined schedule. The field representative is provided the forms necessary to conduct the audit. The audit is hosted by the contractor's Quality Manager and will last all day. The general schedule of an audit is as follows:

8 AM	Opening meeting Conduct Office Record Review	With the Quality Manager review job records, employee-training files, warehouse, internal reviews and generally verify the functioning of the quality system. The auditor randomly selects files from the previous six-month time period to review.
10 AM - 4 PM	Field Inspections	The auditor randomly selects at least 6 job sites to inspect. The selection should reflect the distribution of job types typically done by the contractor (e.g. batted walls, blown attics, etc). The selection should also cover different crews.
4 PM	Conduct Exit Meeting	Review the audit with the Quality Manager and when possible the company senior management. Discuss findings and needed corrective actions.

THE AUDIT REPORT

The process of auditing an insulation contractor requires the field representative to prepare a report of the findings using a standard set of report forms, which include check-sheets, tally-sheets and narrative space. The report from the field representative is reviewed at the Research Center and finalized. The final report will identify any corrective action necessary to maintain certification.

CONTACTS AT NAHB RESEARCH CENTER

NAHB Research Center staff encourages certified contractors to call whenever there is a question about the program or technical issues. For general and technical questions contact:

Robert L. Hill, P.E.
Director, Laboratory Services
301-430-6244
E-mail - bhill@nahbrc.org

For general questions or to request application materials, please contact:

Lynda Marchman
Program Coordinator
301-430-6237
E-mail - lmarchman@nahbrc.org

Visit our World Wide Web site on the Internet for additional information on the NAHB Research Center and this program. Our web page can be accessed through <http://www.nahbrc.org>.